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Page 6**REMARKS**

By this amendment, claims 1 and 4 are canceled, claims 2, 3 and 5-13 are amended, and claims 16 -18 are newly added. The examiner has stated that claims 14 and 15 are allowed. Applicants respectfully acknowledge allowance of these claims. Reconsideration of this application in view of the claim amendments, newly added claims and the following remarks is respectfully requested. Claims 2, 3 and 5-18 are pending.

Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Slemker et al. (US 6,287,345 B). Claim 1 has been canceled. Claims 2, 12 and 13 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 2 has been rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of claim 1. Claim 2 has been further amended to recite a mechanical interlock connected to the vacuum passage and having a second vacuum passage therethrough, and a seal between the mechanical interlock and the vacuum passage. Support for this amendment is found in paragraph 0140 in the published version of the present application, US 2002/0091449 A1. Claim 12 depends from rewritten claim 2, and has been amended to recite a retention member for releasably locking the mechanical interlock. Support for this amendment is found in paragraph 0141 in the published version of the present application, US 2002/0091449 A1. Claim 13 now depends from claim 12, and has been amended to recite the retention member being within the plate/socket attachment biased against the mechanical interlock. Support for this amendment is found in paragraph 0141 in the published version of the present application, US 2002/0091449 A1. Claims 12 and 13 depend from rewritten claim 2, and thus are allowable for at least the same reasons. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the objection and allowance of these claims.

Claims 4 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Slemker et al. (US 6,287,345 B). Claim 4 has been canceled. Claim 8 has been amended to

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depend from rewritten claim 2, and is thus allowable for at least the same reasons. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of this claim.

Claims 9 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Slemker et al. Claims 9 and 10 have been amended to depend from rewritten claim 2 and thus are allowable for at least the same reasons. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of these claims.

Claim 7 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Slemker et al., in view of Fishman et al. (US 5,007,937). Claim 7 has been amended to depend from rewritten claim 2 and thus is allowable for at least the same reasons. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of this claim.

Claims 3, 5, 6 and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Slemker et al., in view of Caspers (US 5,735,906). Claims 3, 5, 6 and 11 have been amended to depend from rewritten claim 2 and thus are allowable for at least the same reasons. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of these claims.

Claims 16-18 are newly added and depend from claim 2, and thus are allowable for at least the same reasons. Applicants respectfully request allowance of these claims.

CONCLUSION

All of the claims remaining in this application should now be seen to be in condition for allowance. The prompt issuance of a notice to that effect is respectfully solicited. If there are any remaining questions, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the number listed below.

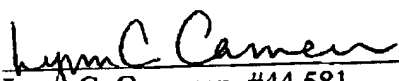
No additional fee is believed to be necessary for the entry of this paper. Should any additional fee be required for entry of this paper, the Commissioner is authorized

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to charge the Faegre & Benson Deposit Account No. 06-0029 and, in such event, is requested to notify us of the same.

Respectfully Submitted,

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